

Lithuanian Parliament Expected to Declare Independence Sunday

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MOSCOW, March 6 — The Parliament of Lithuania has scheduled a meeting on Sunday at which it is expected to declare the republic's independence from the Soviet Union, Lithuanian officials said today.

Kazimiera Prunskiene, a Deputy Prime Minister of Lithuania and representative to the Soviet Parliament, said today that the republic's newly elected non-Communist Parliament would convene on Sunday and would almost surely vote for the restoration of the independent state that existed before the three Baltic republics were forcibly annexed by Stalin in 1940.

President Mikhail S. Gorbachev met for 90 minutes on Monday with the Lithuanian Communist Party leader, Algirdas Brazauskas, in a last-ditch attempt to head off secession by warning of dire economic consequences, but Lithuanians who were briefed on the encounter said the Soviet leader seemed resigned to the Lithuanian decision.

'No Talk of Tanks'

"There was no talk of tanks," one official said, "We're already well past that point."

The neighboring Baltic republic of Estonia has also speeded its moves toward the restoration of independence. On Sunday the republic plans the first meeting of a new Congress of Estonia, which was elected outside the Soviet Constitution.

More than half a million Estonians took part in the elections, open only to those who could trace their family citizenship to the period of Baltic independence between the two World Wars.

Although Moscow does not recognize the legal authority of the Congress, its legitimacy is widely accepted in the republic, even by many public officials.

"The Congress of Estonia is accepted by the Estonian Supreme Soviet itself, by the Estonian Government and by a certain part of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party," said Igor Gryazin, an Estonian member of the Soviet Parliament.

He said the Congress might take



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Lithuania is on the brink of a complete break with Moscow.

steps to begin the republic's formal independence from the Soviet Union.

Nationalists in the second-largest Soviet republic, the Ukraine, announced plans today to form a formal opposition party to press their demands for greater independence from Moscow.

Leaders of the Ukrainian Rukh, an alliance of nationalists, human rights advocates, dissident Communists and Greens, said they would press for political and economic sovereignty that could mean secession from the union.

Ukraine Divided on Independence

But unlike Lithuania, the Ukraine is deeply divided on independence — the west being more separatist, the east more wed to Moscow — and the Rukh has not yet mustered the political might of its Baltic counterparts.

Lithuania and Estonia, long bent on independence, have sped their pace of withdrawal in part because they are suspicious of Mr. Gorbachev and what he might do with the new powers that are expected to be given him in a special meeting of the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies next week.

The general strategy of the two republics is similar: to establish autonomous states, with the Communist pa-

tronage network replaced by a nonpartisan executive branch, and then to open negotiations as equals with Moscow on future relations.

The key questions would be removal of Soviet troops based in the republics, the splitting of industrial assets, and financial claims of members of non-Baltic minority groups who want to move to Russia.

The withdrawal of the two republics from Soviet affairs may be evident next Monday when the Congress of People's Deputies meets to craft a more powerful presidential post for Mr. Gorbachev.

Members of the Lithuanian and Estonian delegations to the Congress said they probably would not take active part in the session. "We might be observers, we might express our opinion, but we can't take any part in making decisions concerning union issues, since we consider ourselves to be representatives of another sovereign state," Mrs. Prunskiene said.

"If the institution of the presidency is adopted and direct elections are organized, then naturally Lithuania will not participate in the elections," she added.

Lithuanians' Nationalist Mandate

Lithuanians gave a mandate for independence in elections on Feb. 24, when the pro-independence movement Sajudis swept the ruling Communist Party from power. Sajudis candidates hold 90 of the 116 seats filled so far in the Lithuanian Parliament.

Mrs. Prunskiene, who is a member of the ruling Politburo of the Lithuanian Communist Party, said she expected to quit the party shortly and predicted that many others would follow suit.

Another member of the Lithuanian party's Politburo, Romualdas Ozolas, also quit this week.

The Lithuanian Communist Party broke with Moscow in December and has supported a gradual, negotiated course toward independence.

"There is no sense remaining in a party of which we were really only formally members, because the dialogue between Lithuania and Moscow is now being conducted not on the party-to-

party level, but by the two Parliaments," Mrs. Prunskiene said.

If Moscow is serious about eschewing force and threats, its strongest weapon would be an economic blockade. Lithuanian economists, including Mrs. Prunskiene, say this would hurt Moscow almost as badly as the Baltics.

Lithuania, where only 20 percent of the population consists of ethnic Russians and other minorities, has moved most aggressively to claim its independence, followed by Estonia, where the 40 percent Russian-speaking minority has been more resistant.

Estonia has scheduled elections to its regular Supreme Soviet, or Parlia-

The minds of the separatists weren't changed.

ment, on March 18, and it is not clear how this body will relate to the new Congress.

Latvia Moves More Cautiously

The third Baltic republic, Latvia, where ethnic Latvians make up just a bit more than half of the population, has moved more cautiously, but separatist sentiment is strong there, too.

Mr. Gorbachev met with representatives of the three Baltic republics last week in what Mrs. Prunskiene described as "a preliminary talk on possible negotiations regarding the restoration of independence."

"Now I understand that he understands our desire for self-determination," she said today. "As to Lithuania, he said that Lithuania would probably be the first to choke on this autonomy. He said it would be worse for both sides. But that's not the way it looks to us. We told him it wouldn't be worse."

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